

## THE MEADOWS

Wednesday, 27 June 2012

“The Meadows” is situated at West Bilney within sight of the Main A47 Norwich Road. For nearly 60 years it was home to my family and the memories of have of them and it are precious. First of all let me introduce you to them:-



Great Grandmother, Ellen (Jana) (nee Fairbanks) b. 1887 died 1975 married Henry (Totty) Adams.

Granny came from Poad Hole in Lincolnshire from a large family. She was in service when she met Henry who hailed from East Winch but was a signal man on the railways near to her place of work.

After their marriage they lived in East Winch in a small cottage, one of a row opposite the Carpenters Arms Public House. During the First World War he joined the Norfolks but was badly injured in 1916 and invalided out with an honourable discharge. Ellen nursed him but he died in 1920. The war by then had been over for 2 years and Gran did not receive a war pension, this meant the family were practically destitute and had to rely on money from the

Parish Poor fund to bury Henry. He was buried at East Winch but I have never found his grave.

To make ends meet Ellen cleaned the church acted as midwife and laid out the dead, putting pennies on their eyes after they breathed their last. Fortunately the local MP, Colonel Woodwark, from Grimston, who was also Henrys commanding officer I think, took up her case. Ellen had to leave the 4 girls and accompany Col Woodwark to The House of Lords, to plead her case. They were due back at East Winch Station at 8 that night but a telegram arrived to say she would not be home until the next day. The girls had built up a blazing fire but they doused the flames with a bucket full of water and trekked in the dark to East Winch. There, Mrs “Blondin” Arter took in Sally and Kath while Nell and Tots went to Mrs Browns who lived at the top of Station Rd in the house occupied by the Poll family in later years.

The war pension was awarded and the Parish Fund was quick to claim its money back!! This pension was only meagre and hardly enough to keep 5 people so Ellen carried on with her jobs but when the Second World War came she finished her maternity work for a while and was employed to cook for the evacuees at East Winch School. Later, she worked on the land.



Ellen (Jana) Adams with one of her four daughters

Ellen & Henry had four daughters.

Ellen Mary (**Nellie**) born 1908 - died 1984

Ida Dorothy (**Tots**) Born 1910? - died 1978?

Ethel Florence (**Sally**) born 1912 - died 1976

Frances Kathleen (**Kath or Whippet**) born 1917 - died 2009.

**Nellie** married Algernon (Joe) Wilson, (b 1905 died 1985) from Pentney when she was 18. They lived in the village until their respective deaths in 1984 & 1985. They had one daughter, Berenice (Teddy).

**Nellie was my Granny and deserves story all of her own which I shall commit to paper after I have finished The Meadows.**

Berenice married Alan Warburton. A Yorkshire man, he hailed from Bradford. They met when his regiment, The Seaforth Highlanders, were stationed at West Bilney Hall and were married at Pentney Church in 1944.

They in turn had one daughter, Pauline Angela, born 1946 (Tuffy), and went to live in East Winch. Berenice died in 1962 at the age of 34. Alan remarried and died in 2008 aged 83

**Tots** married Leslie Ruskin (Luggy) and lived on the marsh at Terrington St Clement until after the war when they came to Pentney to take over the King William (King Billy) pub on Low Road. They had one son, Philip (Fip) who tragically lost an arm in a farm accident when very young. He married Sylvia had 3 children & died in 2012.

**Sally** married John (Jack) Dye (b 1905 d 1979.), who was one of large family from Bilney. They too lived at the Meadows until 1966 when they left to go to Pentney. Sally died in 1976 .She had never worked, although she kept a few chickens at the Meadows and sold the eggs for fag, money!!!!

The only job she ever had was during the war was when she went to join her Mother working on the land. If she had not she would have been conscripted into the services, which would not have suited her at all!! They had no children.



Johnny & Sally Dye at The Meadows

**Kath** married Leonard (Len) Harrison. He was originally from Wisbech one of a family of 8. He started work on the farm of his brother when he left school working with horses. Part of the farm was at Terrington and he lodged with Tots and Les for a time. This was his introduction to the family, as the other members often biked over from Bilney and Pentney to visit. Kath had contracted polio as a young child and was left with a permanent limp. The other girls had to push her to school at East Winch in an old push chair to get there on time. They often used this as an excuse to dawdle. Despite this disability she lived a normal life and on passing the scholarship went to Kings Lynn High School. She then trained as a primary school teacher, working at Pentney and latterly at Narborough until her retirement. Kath had been engaged twice before Len finally captured her affections. By this time he had enlisted in the Royal Navy and war had been declared. They wed in 1945 & after spending the first few months of married life at The Meadows they moved to a bungalow at East Winch. They bought ¼ of an acre of land on Station Road and lived there until Kath's death in 2009. They had no children.

Before I relate my own memories I want to draw on recollections I gathered from Nellie and Kath during the 1970,s, these now span over a Century so are worth recording.

My grandmother, Nellie, could remember her own Grandmother, her Fathers mother, Granny Adams. She lived in one of a row of cottages, now demolished, opposite the old village shop. She wore a long black dress with a lace collar and a black apron in the day. Her hair severely parted under a white mob cap was kept in order by a dousing of home cured lard, which she kept in the bedroom in an oyster shell covered with a lace cloth. Her long bloomers were "split arsed!" or separate legged tied at the back with laces. She also remembered some of her Uncles "Tiny" Adams who was even taller than Totty; he immigrated to Australia. "Gentleman Jack" Adams worked for a stock broker in London as a butler and always came visiting in a bowler hat.

Nellie's first home was on what is now the A47, in a terrace opposite the Carpenters Arms Pub. No running water or electricity of course. There was a 3 holed privy in the yard where one could chat to a neighbour while answering the call of nature. Water was from a pump in the yard, one pump for several houses. The main ablutions were done in the wash house. Bread was baked in a wall oven twice a week; everyone grew their own vegetables and kept a few chickens. Meat was delivered by horse and covered cart although I think the butcher, Mr Youngs, may have lived in the cottages.

The shop in East Winch was run by Mr. Underwood. There you could buy one old pennies worth of black treacle and a pound of sugar, in stiff blue bags, for 2d. Salt was purchased in a block and pepper by the ounce. Milk and butter were bought from Gambles farm by the quart (2 pints) at 1d a pint. Treats were few and far between but Mrs Frost at the Post Office sold coconut chips and fruit drops in a paper cone for ½ d.

There was no school in East Winch then so this meant a 4 mile walk to Ashwicken where the School Mistress, Miss Bolt, arrayed in a long black dress, was in charge. You started school as young as 3½ and left to go to work at 14.

The 3 Rs (Reading, Riting and Rithmatic!) were taught along with sewing and knitting and useful skills for the girls such as patching and darning. At first the children wrote on slates with chalk but progressed to paper and dip pens as they got older. Every child attended Sunday school and there were bible classes at the vicarage on Thursdays with Mr Wally the vicar. The church was always full and the children looked forward to the "Sunday School Treat" which was tea at the vicarage or at the Hall. When East Winch School was built the girls were pleased as the walk was much shorter. They are all featured in school photos on the village web site.

The children played rounders and hop scotch and bowled hoops along with a stick. They also had tops with whips to keep them spinning and the boys played marbles. They very rarely left the village but if anyone did want to go into Lynn they went on the horse drawn bus. The Common was their playground and on November 5<sup>th</sup> they had a bonfire there which often set the whole common alight.

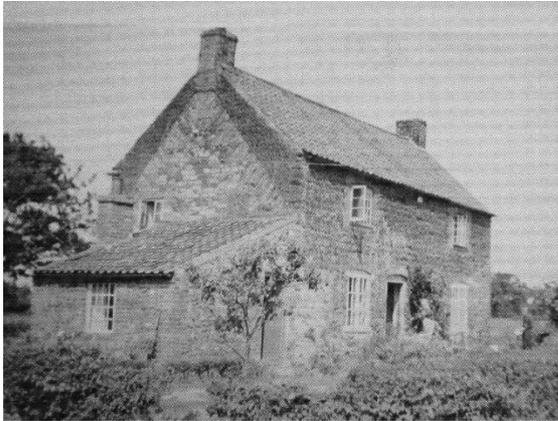
The family moved to The Meadows when Nellie was about 9. The cottage was divided into 2 dwellings consisting of one room downstairs and 2 bedrooms upstairs. This meant that there were 2 adults and 4 children in 2 bedrooms. When the youngest sister was born there was no money, or room, for a cot, instead she was nestled into the big wicker linen basket until she grew too big for it.

Kath the youngest daughter was born in the cottage at Bilney and says she actually gave it its name "The Meadows." When she was young there was not even a radio so every Sunday night, without fail, the family and friends who dropped in gathered round the fire to sing hymns. Marjorie and Jim Griggs moved into the next door cottage and they had a piano, albeit a very basic and probably out of tune one, which was felt to be a wonderful addition to the Sunday night entertainment.

Church played a big role in all their lives. Prior to the first World War her Father, Henry had cleaned the church and tolled the bell on Sundays. His widow took on that task upon his death and Kath used to go with her, when she was a small child to the church and pick out tunes on the harmonium at the north end of the aisle.

## MY MEADOWS.

The most magical place to me in childhood was “The Meadows “at West Bilney. Here, for a few weeks in the summer holidays I lived an enchanted life, cocooned in love. The first of the 2 semi detached cottages was occupied by my Great Granny, Ellen Adams, always known to me as “Bilney Gran.”



Here, for the past 40 years she had lived a God fearing, hard working and blameless life. Her husband had died, in 1920, from wounds received in the First World War but she had raised her 4 daughters, watch them marry and leave home. I thought she was the nearest thing to an angel I would ever know. Next door lived her married daughter Sally and her husband

John, my Great Aunt & Uncle. All through the year the whole family would gravitate back to the little cottage be it for Sunday tea, Birthdays and Christmas or just for the pleasure of being there.

Set well back from the main Norwich road down a long and bumpy “coach drive” it was built from local carstone. Its architecture was in no way remarkable, a square house divided into 2 cottages set in about ½ acre of garden. They were owned by Billy Knights who once lived in the village but had moved to Gooderstone. The rent of 4/6 per week was faithfully put in a tin by each of the tenants and often it would be nearly a year before the landlord called to collect, but he knew it would be there to the penny.

Each cottage consisted of one room downstairs with a long larder running along it full length at the back and two bedrooms. The main room downstairs, square in shape, had one small window. On one side there was a large fireplace with a mantel shelf high enough for a man to rest his arm on. A brass companion set stood in the hearth with brush, pan & poker hung ready. The coal scuttle too was always full even in summer so that a fire could be lit in the grate that was laid ready with paper and sticks. Family treasures were displayed on the mantel shelf and a large mirror hung over it. The grate was religiously black leaded most days, the large wall oven next to it was usually covered by a curtain but on baking days this was pulled back, the fire lit under it and when the oven door glowed red it was hot enough to bake in. Wonderful bread, cakes sausage rolls etc were produced; the Christmas puddings of course were boiled in the wall copper in the wash house, complete with silver threepenny bits in them. As many as 8 or 10 were made at a time each boiled in cloths for several hours and then hung up in the cool pantry until needed.

Around the sides of the room were a variety of arm chairs, none of which matched and a rather broken down sofa in the corner that was only sat on at Christmas time. A sideboard housed the special ornaments and family photos and in it was kept the best china, cake stands, fruit bowls and trifle dishes. A bureau stood near the door, which was always open in the summer.

A large wind up radiogram stood proudly near to the window. I can never remember it being used but was told that during the war years, when service men came to visit, the table was taken outside, the rugs rolled up and the radiogram played all the latest tunes for dancing. During my time it was covered with a lace cloth and on top of it stood the radio. This was the main form of entertainment in the 1950s. Gran loved Mrs Dale and The Archers but was also partial to Paul Temple. Aunt Sally meanwhile was a passionate cricket fan and also loved boxing. She would rise from her bed in the middle of the night to listen to a bout that was being broadcast from the USA. The radio ran on an accumulator a large glass contraption attached to it at the back. These needed recharging each week. So on Monday nights the spare one was taken to the top of the coach drive and left in a large box there. Jack Bensley would arrive Tuesday morning and collect the used accumulator and leave a new one. The charge for this service was 6d which was also left in the box for collection.

Daily papers were left here too, The Herald and News of the World for Aunty and Uncle. The Daily Mirror and the Sunday People for Gran.

The main focus of the room was the large square table that stood in its centre. In the day time it was covered with oil cloth and here all the kitchen chores took place. All food preparation was done on it and the washing up too. A large primus stove was put on it in the summer when there was no fire and pans of vegetable and stews bubbled merrily away. On ironing day, covered by thick pad of old sheets, it served as an ironing board, Gran heating her 2 black flat irons on the front of the fire and spitting on them to make sure they were hot enough.

At dinner time 12pm a serviceable table cloth was spread over its surface. This was the main meal of the day and needed a cloth worthy of it!! Tea time, about 4.30 saw a more delicate cloth being used often hand embroidered with a lace edge. After dinner and at night the surface was covered with a chenille cloth in deep red or green with long fringes hanging down the sides. At night the oil lamp would be placed in its centre to give the room a wonderful glow. During the week the lamp used would have a plain glass base but on high days and holidays the best lamp would be on show, with a ruby red glass base which I loved. The lamp glasses were quite fragile and often got broken so spares were essential. The ceiling became quite brown from their flames so had to be white washed or distempered frequently. The ceiling was also discoloured from the cigarettes that everyone seemed to smoke in those days. Despite this, even at Christmas when 16 of us would crowd into the tiny room, I never remember it smelling smoky. In the ceiling was a large hook which was probably used to hold a side of bacon in previous times. It came in useful at Christmas to hang balloons on!

The walls were papered and on the uneven floor was coconut matting which was hardwearing and cheap. It was only lifted once a year in the spring and beaten on the line. A home made rag rug was laid in front of the fire and this with the door mats were shook daily. The matting was brushed with a stiff brush on hands and knees, no vacuum cleaners then and no electricity to run them.

A cool, dark pantry ran the whole length of the back of the house and here was kept all the pots, pans and everyday china as well as all the food and the water jars. A large wooden safe with a mesh door was used to store perishables and its long shelves housed the preserves and

tins. Milk was kept cool in the water jars in the summer and flies were dealt with by hanging up a fly paper in the main room and later by a good dousing of DDT puffed along the window sill!!

In the corner of the room a door led onto a set of stairs that wound its way to the bedrooms. The front one was occupied by Gran where she slept on a feather mattress in a high brass bedstead. The walls were decorated with pictures of religious texts such as I am the Way or Abide with Me. On the dressing table stood the china bowl and large jug complete with soap dish and tooth mug. I can never remember it being used in my time, all ablutions were carried out on the main table except for bathing and that was done in the wash house.

The back bed room housed the spare bed and always smelt of the apples that were wrapped in newspaper and stored there. A tiny window looked out over the fields to the main road and I would often sit curled up in it watching the traffic go by on the top road and retreating into a fantasy world that Bilney always supplied.

There was a wash house attached to each cottage which boasted a huge stone copper where on a Monday after rising at 5 Gran would set to lighting the fire under the copper filling it with pails of water and then boiling up the heavy linen sheets, towels etc. A wash board and scrub brush was essential equipment as was a generous supply of Reckitts blue bags to give her whites that extra "glow!" The mangle stood outside the door, with its iron handle and heavy rollers it was a miracle that my 5ft Gran could work such an instrument of torture. She was used to hard work though and every piece of laundry was wrung as dry as possible before it was pegged out on the long linen line in the garden. The two women had separate lines and would always ask permission to peg a few extras on the other one. The tin bath hung on the wall outside. In summer the bathing was done in the wash house but in winter it was in front of the fire.

Because my Mother worked I was sent to Bilney to stay for the summer holidays, which to me was bliss, in spite of no electricity, running water or bathroom. When I stayed with her, Gran was in her mid 60s a small, cuddly woman with white hair, every child's idea of a Granny in those days. Her face showed the hard times she had endured but her outlook was sunny and loving which was also reflected in her expression. No make up except for a dab of Crème Puff in the afternoon but she was partial to costume jewellery and always pinned on a brooch in the afternoons and wore pretty ear rings and necklaces when she went out. She had a deep faith and would sing hymns to me in her light soprano, hymns that remain favourites of mine to this day. She spoke softly with a slight Lincolnshire lilt and never ever swore. If she was really cross she would exclaim "Oh the Bustering Thing!!" which meant it was best to get out of the way for a while.

There were no other children near to me so I had to make my own entertainment but with all the delights that I shall describe this was not a problem!! As an only child with a vivid imagination I was used to amusing myself and Bilney was an idyllic world with adventures galore just waiting to happen.

Naturally I had to be suitably attired for such adventures and Gran had an endless supply of wonderful things that appealed to the fashion sense of a 5 year old!! First, she would tie a piece

of elastic around my waist and then pleat into it a length of lemon net, embroidered with ribbon bows, left over from an old dance dress of one of her daughters. A branch of artificial flowers long past their best were clipped into my hair and best of all, diamond drop earrings (or so I thought) hung on my ears with lengths of cotton. Arrayed in all this splendour and with one of her old handbags, stuffed with money made from cut up editions of the Daily Mirror I sallied forth each morning into my own kingdom. To the side of the house stood the wooden sawing bench used for chopping wood for the fire. This became my trusty steed, my carriage, sailing boat and taxi!!

After riding on this magic carpet I would then alight and make my way to my own luxury residence or "The Wash House" as it was normally called. This was my own private domain and I spent hours turning it into a real des res. The coal heap was covered in clean sacks a pretty table cloth spread on the white deal table and fresh flowers from the fields tastefully arranged in various jam jars and placed on the windowsill and the table. Two old chairs were draped with curtains and the walls hung with art work produced by myself on sugar paper with coloured pencils. All this interior design too up a good deal of time and it could take a couple of days before I was ready to receive visitors.

My chief visitor was Uncle Johnny, who usually had his annual week's holiday at about this time. I would write him an elegantly worded invitation on lined paper torn from an exercise book and decorated with childish patterns inviting him to afternoon tea. At the appointed hour he would dutifully present himself at the wash house door, where I, resplendent in my yellow net was waiting to greet him. Milk and biscuits, thoughtfully provided by Gran were on offer and my Uncle sat and manfully consumed these treats. I meanwhile entertained him with an endless flow of chatter in my best BBC voice until with shaking shoulders and streaming eyes he bade me good bye and retired to the end of the garden to have a good laugh in private!!

Other visitors to the cottage were not invited into my show home. Often one of Gran's many sisters, from Lincolnshire would come to spend the afternoon and on those occasions I was divested of my finery, made to wash behind my ears and have my hair brushed vigorously. I was instructed to sit quietly and speak when spoken to!

Great preparations had been made for these visits, mats shook, brasses polished and of course a wonderful home baked cake stood pride of place on the table. Normally I would be allowed first slice as it came hot from the oven but when Aunt Kat, Lil or Clara were coming I had to forgo this treat and wait until they had all been served on the best china tea plates that only came out of the sideboard on high days and holidays. Often they refused the cake much to my chagrin especially as I was only given a small slice and as I had been warned before hand not to ask for more, as the Aunts needed to be shown I was a well brought up child, I resented their visits mightily and was glad when we all trooped up the coach drive and waved them off as they caught the bus back to Lynn!!

Another summer visitor to the cottage was Uncle Johnnie's brother in law who rejoiced in the name of Morton Hezekiah Brand, known to us all as Moosh!! He had married one of Uncles sisters, Alice, and they lived in Windsor in the Castle grounds where he was a gardener. He

was always smartly dressed and full of fun. He and Uncle used to board the bus on the Tuesday of his holiday for a visit to Lynn, bearing strict instructions to bring back some towels or sheets from off "The Hill" or Tuesday market. They wore tweed sports jackets and carried gabardine macs in case of a shower. Trilby hats completed the ensemble the more normal head gear of cloth cap put aside for this special outing. They always came home in high spirits so I suspect they had called in at one or two of the pubs that were open all day on market day but as long as they had purchased the linen required they were safe from Aunt Sally's tongue!

Uncle Moosh was very generous to me and always gave me some pocket money. 1953, Coronation year, was a very lucrative year for me as I used to hide behind the bush that separated the 2 cottages and sing "There's a golden heart in a golden coach that belongs to you and me" This always went down well and a half crown was usually forthcoming. Needless to say I sung it several times.

These departures from routine only occupied a few days of the holidays. A normal day at Bilney started at 8am for me when I was called downstairs for breakfast of toast made on top of the oil stove. Aunt Sally would come in to join us as Uncle had left at about 5.30am to cycle the several miles to his work at Bawsey. Aunt was always up to get his breakfast and pack his dinner bag but waited to have her own repast with Gran. She brought her own bread with her which Gran toasted.

Aunt Sally was a big woman, probably weighing about 15 stone. Her voice was loud and her appetite large. Her opinions were simple but fixed. She was also frightened of anything outside her own small world and lots of things within it too. I never knew her to go on holiday or even go to Kings Lynn, the fire could not be stoked up, even on the coldest day for fear of a chimney blaze and she would never call a doctor, even when she was really ill, for fear of being sent to hospital. She only left the cottage to visit other members of the family locally or close friends in the village. She was fiercely possessive of her husband and showed her affection by constant nagging. Her thin hair was dyed a curious ginger hue and tightly permed by a home hairdresser. She too liked to use Crème Puff but rather more liberally than Gran and her cheeks sported 2 dabs of Bourjoise rouge and her lipstick was bright red. She was rarely seen without a cigarette and smoked Woodbines until the day she died. She was devoted to animals and had a succession of overweight cats and dogs. Some of the family thought her loud and lazy but I loved her dearly and she returned that love ten fold to me and later to my husband and children.

In the mornings both ladies sported turbans under which their hair was wound onto steel curlers, put in the night before. A working dress would be covered by a wrap round piny to protect them from the spills and stains that often occurred during the morning's chores.

After breakfast the decks would be cleared pots washed and the preparation of dinner began on the oil cloth. Mats would be shook, furniture polished, feather beds turned and vegetables dug or picked from the garden. Aunt & I would walk to the top of the coach drive to fetch the milk and the papers. Often she would take me across to Barnbrookes garage where I would be treated to an Ice Cream. Mr & Mrs Barnbrooke ran the garage with their 3 daughters and one of them had added a small café for lorry drivers to the premises. This was where we could buy the ice cream. The café was a great success, helped in great measure by the fact that all 3 sisters were very pretty. By the time we returned Gran would have the dinner well in hand. My favourite

dinner was served on Mondays. She would cut up the left over roast from Sunday and put it along with any gravy into a large pan with any vegetables that were in season. It would cook gently away all morning until just 20 minutes before 12 she would make dumplings. Large, fluffy Norfolk dumplings made of just self raising flour and water, so light they seemed to float in the stew. Even as a small child I would greedily consume 2 and often have a large helping of steamed treacle pudding to follow. Again Aunty ate with us, but usually just bringing in a sandwich as she ate her main meal with Uncle at tea time about 5. However, when dumplings or treacle pudding were on offer she would usually consume as many as I.

All my family loved to cook & eat and this passion has continued along the generations to my own children & grandchildren.

After boiling the kettle and washing up in a large enamel bowl, both ladies changed into their afternoon outfits. Hair would be combed out and a fine hair net put on to keep the curls in place. A clean frock with a small floral apron replaced the mornings more serviceable attire and the aforementioned Crème Puff applied. Gran would then settle down with the paper and often doze in her chair. Aunty with her more liberal application of make up would switch on the cricket. I would resume my adventures and wander around the many paths in the garden taking in the scent of sweet peas and marigolds and clove pinks. I watched the combine harvester droning in the field in front of the cottage and sat by the pit hole to catch a glimpse of the water hens and their family taking a swim. From the cottage drifted the voice of John Arlott recording another maiden over; I can never remember it raining.

Most days of the week at least one tradesman called. Coal was delivered from East Winch by Philip Valentine who had a yard opposite the shop. His Mother kept the Post Office there. Aunt Sally had a special coal that did not burn as quickly as she was petrified of fire!! Meat, bread & groceries were all brought to the door too. Each of these tradesmen became friends of the family and as they delivered to all 4 girls would take messages and letters between them. They all stopped for a cup of tea and a chat and often a piece of cake too. How they completed their rounds in the allotted time is a mystery. Groceries were delivered once a week at first by Bessie and Arthur Morton who ran the village shop in Pentney. They were personal friends of the family so there was always plenty to chat about. Arthur had a cleft palate and his strange way of talking fascinated me and for once I was quiet trying to understand what he said. When they retired Les Caley from Marham took over the deliveries and became a great favourite. Of course everyone was in the Christmas club where you put a few shillings each week, which was recorded on a card and then spent with the grocer or butcher for all the festive necessities. Meat was delivered by Ron the butcher from Kings Lynn and his son Roger. They came on Tuesdays and Fridays to deliver the order that had been placed on their last visit. They always carried further supplies on the van and usually Aunt would be tempted out to buy a few little extras. They too became friends of the family and when my own mother lay terminally ill in bed Ron always left her a piece of salt pork free of charge because he knew it was her favourite. Bread and cakes were also delivered on those days by Neville the baker so it was quite a social whirlwind!!

Another savings club was also in operation called "The Diddleum" Each week for 50 weeks of the year the sisters and quite a few friends and neighbours too handed over a small sum of money to Kath, anything from 2 shillings to 10 shillings. This was recorded on a card which the saver kept and in a book by Kath. This was then deposited in the Post Office and just before Christmas it was withdrawn and each person received their money minus one weeks payment which Kath kept as salary for being banker. Bilney Gran put 1 shilling a week away in my name so in December I had 50 shillings or £2 & 10 shillings to spend. I used it to buy all my friends and family Christmas Presents. This meant an exciting trip to Lynn with my mother to visit The Belfast, Jermyns and Le Grices and Allen & Neale the chemist, all emporiums stocked with goodies that my family loved and pondering over each purchase to make my money stretch as far as possible

The land surrounding the cottages was divided up into several sections covering about ½ an acre and they were all included in my kingdom. Aunt & Uncle had a proper vegetable garden to the side and back of their property and grew every vegetable they could. Rows and rows of King Edward potatoes were set and harvested and then put in a clamp to supply them all winter. The surplus of each crop was preserved for the winter. Runner beans salted, plums & tomatoes bottled and fruit made into jam or chutney. Large glass sweet jars would be filled with pickled onions and red cabbage ready to accompany the large pork pies that Schuphams the butcher made especially for the family at Christmas. A large "pit hole" was situated at the end of the plot next to the field and this was used as a rubbish tip for tins and anything that could not be burnt. No recycling then. Uncles garden was a riot of colour with rows of dahlias, sweet peas and asters. Aunty was not much of a gardener but enjoyed the flowers and spent a lot of time with her chickens. Two large runs took over a large part of the garden one to the front and one to the rear. Gran had no vegetable garden to speak of but raised a few tomatoes and lettuces, Aunt and Uncle shared their vegetables with her.

Several large apple trees stood proudly around the cottages, both cookers and eaters, the best cooking apples came from the trees at the back of the cottage and provided the whole family with pies and chutney. Rhubarb thrived as did herbs like sage and mint. Wild plums and greengages grew in the hedges along the coach drive along with hazelnuts and blackberries, all food for free. A small dike at the back of the property was quite deep in places and along its bank grew a lilac hedge. The most stunning deep scented blooms hung over the dike and we would all go out armed with hoes to hook the branches to us and cut them to fill the cut glass vases proudly displayed on the deep window sills. Parts of the garden had not been cultivated for many years so these were overgrown with wild flowers.

The garden in front of Grans cottage had been laid out in the 1930,s by Kath and it even boasted a small lawn. Phlox, delphiniums, roses and marigolds all grew in a wonderful tangle with bright orange marigolds and violas pushing their little faces towards the light. Shamrock grew outside the wash house door and it was anxiously inspected on wash days to make sure that its flowers were fully open, thus assuring us of no rain. All the paths, trees and fields were MY kingdom and on lazy summer afternoons I was its queen without a care in the world.

I was summoned from my world back into the cottage to listen to Mrs Dales Diary. We all got "terribly worried about Jim" and then Gran and I were ready for tea when it finished about

4.45. Tea was a light meal, sandwiches with freshly cut lettuce and crunchy radishes from the garden. Cake of course and sometimes even tinned peaches with Carnation milk and a slice of bread and butter. While we ate Uncle returned home on his bike. I was not allowed to go next door until they had finished their tea, but once it was over I would rush round and together he and I would walk up to the Dixons farm to collect the water from the well. To do this we had to run the gauntlet of a flock of very ferocious geese that would run after us, heads down hissing. Uncle would swing the galvanised pails at them but we often got nipped. When we returned home he would go into the wash house to wash and shave singing all the while and then light a cigarette and stroll to the privy at the back of the house. At one time there were two privies but now they shared one and Uncle had the unenviable task of emptying them. When I was very young my job was to cut up the Daily Mirror into squares and then it would be threaded onto string and hung in the privy. Later we graduated to Izal toilet paper which not only had a peculiar smell but was very slippery. On balance I think the Daily Mirror was preferable. If anyone was caught short in the night there were plenty of chamber pots under each bed.

Next on the agenda was “The Archers” faithfully listened to each evening. Walter Gabriel was the big favourite along with Dan and Doris of course. If the evening was especially warm we might venture out for a walk across the fields to Walton or just up to the top of the coach drive to watch the cars go by.

We picked field mushrooms from the field to the rear of the cottage, some as big as dinner plates with deep brown gills. These were fried and eaten for supper.

On other evenings when Aunt had washed up and Uncle was reading the paper or working in the garden us three girls would settle down to a game of Newmarket. A Gold Flake tin kept in the bureau by the door held the two packs of cards held together with a thick elastic band. If it was cold the fire would be lit and the oil lamp brought out and play would commence. We played in earnest everyone keen to get out and win the 2d or 3d on the horses. At the end of the game though I was handed all the winnings.

By then it was time for bed, Aunt returned home to make supper and after a snack I was duly washed and taken up to bed. Here Gran made a burrow in the feathers for me and I was left with Womans Weekly or Red Letter to look at while she went back down stairs to bank down the fire and lock up. When Gran came up it took some time before she had divested herself of the many layers that made up her day to day dress. Under her dress she wore a full length petticoat and then a bust bodice that fastened at the front. Under this was a vest and in winter a spenser and often thermogene as she suffered with her chest. A pink boned corset with suspenders held up her stockings over sensible long legged knickers. Before slipping on her winceyette nighty liberal application of Vick was rubbed onto her chest and a Beechams Pill taken. A thicker hairnet was used to sleep in. “Good night my golden drop and God bless” were always her last words to me.

When she quit the cottage in 1967 the heart went out of the family.